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Sisters Say Dad Was Abuser, Seek Damages in Civil Suit The Union Leader (Manchester, NH)
October 13, 1991 Sunday

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SECTION: SECTION A Pg. 1**LENGTH:** 614 words**HEADLINE:** Sisters Say Dad Was Abuser, Seek Damages in Civil Suit**BYLINE:** PAT HAMMOND Sunday News Staff**BODY:**

EXETER - Two sisters who allege their father sexually molested them during their childhood are suing him for damages.

The women, who live in Windham and Pepperell, Mass., have asked the Rockingham County Superior Court in Exeter to attach \$ 3 million of assets of their father James A. **Johnston** of Windham and of two companies in which they say he has major holdings.

Johnston, reached at his home last night, said he had no comment on the lawsuit.

The companies are **Johnson & Johnston Associates, Inc. of Hampstead** and Synergy Engineering & Tool Co., Inc. of North Andover, Mass.

The defendants argued that the court has no jurisdiction over Synergy, which is in Massachusetts and the alleged incidents occurred prior to the existence of either of the companies.

The lawsuit also said **Johnston** is neither in control of nor the major stockholder of either company. They said the attachment would cripple the companies.

The sisters are seeking compensation for the psychological, emotional and medical distress they say they underwent because of **Johnston's** alleged sexual behavior toward them.

Boston attorney Murray P. Reiser, who is representing the sisters, said Friday that this may well be the first New Hampshire case of daughters suing a father in connection with incest.

A similar case was filed two years ago in the U.S. District Court in Concord. Daniel Raymond Ford of Nashua filed a \$ 3 million suit against his father, Daniel Eugene Ford, alleging the father sexually abused him as a child. The suit against Daniel Eugene Ford, former president of the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Laconia and Concord, is still pending.

The sisters asked the court to order that **Johnston** refrain from selling any assets until after a ruling has been issued in the case.

One sister began therapy in January 1989 at a private treatment center for symptoms ranging from alcohol abuse and suicidal thinking to depression and mood swings. In May she disclosed during therapy that she had allegedly been sexually abused between the ages of eight and 11 by **Johnston**.

The other sister, in January, 1990, began experiencing depression, anxiety, anger and fear. In April she disclosed during therapy sessions at another treatment center that she had been sexually abused by her father between the ages of six and nine.

According to court papers, neither of the daughters recalled the alleged incidents of sexual harassment until they entered therapy.

Reiser said it is not uncommon for the young victim of sexual harassment or abuse to deal with the trauma either by blocking it out or by developing multiple personalities.

The condition is called dissociation, Reiser said. Court papers define that as "a psychological condition common to adult survivors of incest abuse," and say it "prevented (them) from knowing that their problems were caused by the abuse perpetrated upon them by **Johnston**." During the period 1968 to 1971, court papers say, the two plaintiffs and a third sister, who is not involved in the suit, shared a bedroom.

Johnston, the father, allegedly entered the bedroom on an almost nightly basis during that period and systematically abused the two by engaging in sexual intercourse with them and sexual misconduct.

Johnston often abused each girl with the other present, the papers say. He is also alleged to have been physically abusive and violent, often beating the girls and their mother and destroying property in the home.

Court papers say that as a result of the abuse, the sisters suffered severe psychological and emotional harm which necessitated psychiatric treatment that is expected to continue indefinitely.

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